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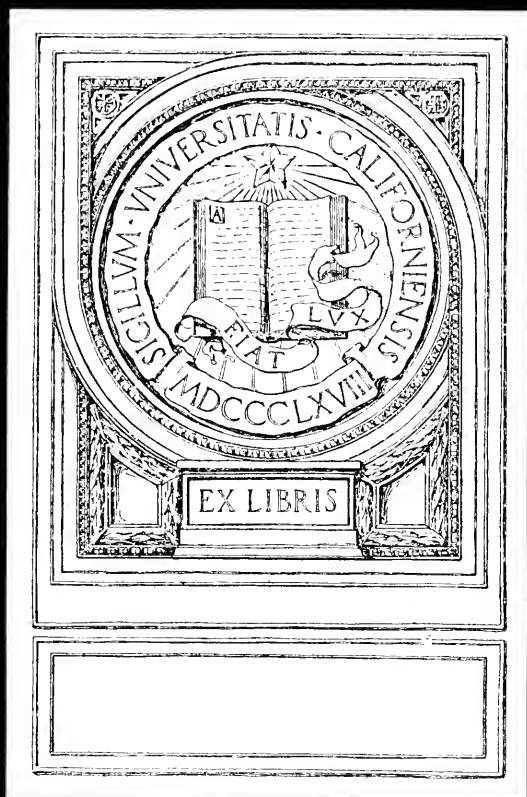
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PAPERS FOR WAR TIME. No. 31

British and German Scholarship

By

JAMES HOPE MOULTON

D.D., D.Theol. (Berlin)

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BASIS OF PUBLICATION

This series of Papers is issued under the auspices of a Committee drawn from various Christian bodies and political parties, and is based on the following convictions :

1. That Great Britain was in August morally bound to declare war and is no less bound to carry the war to a decisive issue ;
2. That the war is none the less an outcome and a revelation of the un-Christian principles which have dominated the life of Western Christendom and of which both the Church and the nations have need to repent ;
3. That followers of Christ, as members of the Church, are linked to one another in a fellowship which transcends all divisions of nationality or race ;
4. That the Christian duties of love and forgiveness are as binding in time of war as in time of peace ;
5. That Christians are bound to recognize the insufficiency of mere compulsion for overcoming evil, and to place supreme reliance upon spiritual forces and in particular upon the power and method of the Cross ;
6. That only in proportion as Christian principles dictate the terms of settlement will a real and lasting peace be secured ;
7. That it is the duty of the Church to make an altogether new effort to realize and apply to all the relations of life its own positive ideal of brotherhood and fellowship ;
8. That with God all things are possible.

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WAR and scholarship have not in the abstract much to do with one another. The scholar is normally in a back-water where the tide of public life flows past him without ruffling his environment ; and men of affairs put him out of their reckoning as an excellent person who may be a national asset but is very little qualified to be a national adviser. In this war, unique as it is in so many directions, the scholar has become a storm centre. The university professors of Germany are regarded in this country as responsible beyond any single class, except the bureaucracy itself, for the making of the atmosphere in which the war arose ; and one of their number, Treitschke, is held accountable almost in the first place of all. We are learning how a marvellously efficient system of national education, in a country where education counts more than in any other, has been skilfully organized by the ruling oligarchy to hypnotize a docile people into the right spirit. Very possibly the professors are in some danger of receiving too large a share of the credit for the figure Germany is now presenting to the world. But the fact is clear that the intellectuals, so far from seeing vividly and teaching irresistibly that war is a crime against humanity,

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have lent themselves to the militarist propaganda. They contributed very largely to the development of the temper which has been Germany's undoing. Fatally deficient in the saving gift of humour, the nation has developed a megalomania which imagines civilization destined to die with itself. And the pity of it is that the men who must bear the blame of a terrible failure in a crisis where ideas weighed more than in any crisis in history, are men who in all branches of pure knowledge have been among the leaders of the world. They could interpret the face of the sky, but they knew not how to interpret the signs of the times. It is to be feared that were Plato revising his *Republic* with an experience gained in modern Europe, he would think twice and thrice before making the philosopher king.

In this paper we are not so much concerned to discuss the past as to look forward to the possibilities of the future. The difficulties of settlement are stupendous, and they depend so overwhelmingly on the issue of the war that we can hardly wonder if people turn impatiently from any discussion as premature. At present White and Black have alike lost a terrible number of pieces, but we feel very sure White has the winning position. Yet it remains wholly uncertain whether it is to be mate in ten moves or in a hundred, and it might be stalemate after all. Calculations based on any of these three possibilities, putting out of sight the unthinkable fourth, are liable to be wholly upset by the turn of events, and we can only wait. Still, as public opinion must have a great deal to do with the ultimate settlement, there

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should obviously be the most strenuous effort to prepare opinion without hurry, even if results are only contingent. And in any case there must be every effort to cultivate the temper in which alone both justice and humanity can operate. Indignation, stern and deep, can coexist with unsleeping vigilance lest we should be unjust to our enemy, or fail to allow for the forces which have deranged his better nature. Unflinching determination to use force, since we have been forced into it, till force is finally dethroned, is consistent with a master passion for reconciliation. Even the rough unthinking man of the world cannot deny that we shall have to live with the Germans somehow when the war is over ; and it is worth his while to ask how we can keep them from cherishing schemes of revenge and preparing for it even under the severest system of repression. The Christian meanwhile—driven to make a choice of evils, in a world where the hardness of men's hearts is always making the ideal impossible—will never feel that we have conquered Germany till we have slain the enmity. We draw the sword with no less resolution because we draw it with horror and loathing ; but we mean Love to have the last word when Belgium, and France, and Serbia, and Poland, and the dominions of the Turk, are all delivered from the god of battles into the hands of the God of Peace.

With these objects in view, we may turn to the special department with which this paper is concerned. German scholarship and science are naturally being canvassed vehemently in Britain to-day. One cannot be surprised

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if a general depreciation of things made in Germany extends to its hitherto acknowledged intellectual eminence. Noisy obscurantists are thanking God that they know no German, and declaring that the most mischievous things in our religious life are importations from over the Rhine. Yet it is not long since many of them were rejoicing over a German Daniel come to judgement, who was supposed to have seriously damaged an established theory of literary criticism in the Old Testament. On the other hand, we have heard first-rank scholars declaring that we have taken the Germans too much at their own valuation, to the detriment of our independence. It may be so, though the extent of this servility has been greatly exaggerated. The acceptance of German results on the part of British scholars is far more frequently due to the conscientious industry with which German research has done its work. Those who know accept, and those who do not know may cavil. It would be more dignified and more profitable if those who are interested simply in the advancement of knowledge would turn from such debates, and receive for rigid testing, and grateful acknowledgement when approved, the work of investigators in any nation. Nothing but science and her votaries will suffer if research ceases to be cosmopolitan, and seekers after truth duplicate their investigations through refusal to read work already published in a foreign and hated tongue.

Much might be said, no doubt, of provocation that has come from German scholarship, arrogantly ignoring the best work of other nations, and suffering the nemesis

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which Science always inflicts on those who forget her first laws. But there has certainly been a marked improvement in recent years ; and a real republic of letters never seemed nearer than it was when the great chasm suddenly opened between us and our fellow workers. One or two illustrations might be given from fields that are more familiar than others to the writer himself. Comparative Philology, a science which sprang out of an Englishman's daring guess, has been almost exclusively cultivated by German research. Yet the only first-rate manual of Greek and Latin philology produced in this country, since the new birth of the science under great German philologists thirty years ago, has been translated into German. The later history of Greek, developed into a new science by the pioneer work of German philologist and theologian, has been pursued under the fullest and happiest conditions of fellowship between British, French, German and American scholars and explorers. In some fields, such as that of Iranian language and literature, German workers have little enough from Britain to quote, but use most freely what does come. Theology, so far as one may generalize on so many-sided a subject, is in a less happy condition, and German thought would be all the better for a larger knowledge of the best British work. But even there the enormous output may well be held largely responsible. Here, however, we may claim on this side that our leading theologians have rarely shown themselves ignorant of the best that has been done in Germany. Sometimes of course there has been unwarranted haste in accepting theories from a country whose scholars are

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generally stronger in collecting facts than in divining consequences. But British theology has far more often received and weighed to its own immense profit, proving all things with sane and cautious judgement, and holding fast only what is good.

Now the prominence of a number of exceedingly eminent German theologians, scholars, and scientists in the paper defence of their country at the present time has started some natural problems in the minds of educated Britons. It must be admitted that these leaders of intellect show few of the qualities we should have expected from men trained to examine evidence and decide dispassionately on momentous issues. The most rigidly neutral critic might safely be invited to compare the temper of pleas by distinguished British and German intellectual and spiritual leaders, as printed in the three first numbers of *Goodwill*. Is there anything from the German side to compare in fairness and freedom from bitterness with Professor Sanday's pamphlet or Mr. Clutton-Brock's *Thoughts on the War*—to name only two out of many? We have Professor Wundt not only accepting guilelessly the forged speech of Mr. John Burns, and sundry other fairy stories which perhaps he has no means of testing, but showing such grotesque incapacity to read the English character that we begin to reflect with amazement that he is the author of a notable book on *Völkerpsychologie*. We have the two manifestoes by theologians and leaders in foreign missionary enterprise, sincere and poignant in the extreme, and full of the distress which any real Christian must feel in the fearful

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rending of Western Christianity. But even here patent facts are astonishingly distorted. Belgium is not mentioned in the first : in the second our British Reply has brought out a defence through which a child can see—the fact that Belgium had tried to make some provisional arrangement for help, when faced with strategic railways concentrated on her frontier, is regarded as cancelling her neutrality ! Harnack makes the same point in his reply to British Free Churchmen (*Goodwill*, p. 33) ; and he shows the same incapacity to understand our veneration for the ‘ scrap of paper ’, which for our Government and our nation turned the scale last August. Nor do any of them make any allusion to Sir Edward Grey’s entreaty to the German Government to propose an alternative course if his own proposal of a conference were unacceptable. These will serve as typical examples of the blindness and unfairness of men from whom penetration and judicial temper might have been expected. Can we explain the failure ? A great many intelligent and serious men put the matter away as not needing an explanation. They simply assume that the mask of civilization has been torn from a people who are barbarians at bottom—

Not five in five score,
But ninety-five more.

An explanation which merely falls back on original sin gives us as little light on the past as it gives hope for the future. We know some of these men, and we shall not be persuaded by all the journalists in concert that such men were insincere in their friendship, secretly toasting ‘ The Day ’ when they pretended to desire nothing but peace.

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It is a truer psychology which points out that national panic is capable of producing very strange symptoms in men normally sober and humane. We know something of the German public's ignorance of events which all the world knows, their confident belief in a whole mythology with its scene laid in Britain: the national genius for thoroughness has had full scope in the official news department. Join this imperfect information with the anxiety, public and private, resulting from the hope of victory deferred and now becoming more than doubtful, and we can more or less understand how men with the German temperament should have lost in time of need so many qualities for which they once were distinguished. Harnack himself—to take one eminent example—whose daughter has been widowed by a British bullet, has evidently failed to apply to the British case against Germany the impartiality he would show in a discussion on New Testament criticism. Such suggestions are not made as if they excused the violence and futility of famous scholars who in this controversy have damaged nothing but their own reputation. There may be other elements in the diagnosis of which we necessarily know nothing. But before we cast out their names as evil, let us remember what we thought of them this time last year. And let us reflect that they stand with men whose practical Christian enthusiasm showed itself by many infallible proofs, leaders of missionary enterprise who sat with us in the World Conference at Edinburgh, influential churchmen who were labouring earnestly and successfully in the cause of Anglo-German friendship. If the key to their

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present behaviour is nothing but a blind patriotism which overwhelms both heart and head, we may well give up human nature as an insoluble riddle.

To analyse scientifically the psychology of German scholarship at the present time is an interesting problem, but not the most practical to which we can address ourselves just now. We have to ask what the future relations will be between British and German fellow workers. This is only a section of the general question which will be the first of all questions when the war is over ; but in view of the immense weight of the scholar class in Germany it becomes a matter of the utmost importance that Britons who come into relations with them should have the right end in view, and pursue it with insight, firmness, and sympathy.

First among all our duties as thinkers or church workers must obviously be the checking of tendencies to Prussianize our own country. These tendencies are by no means imaginary. Among recent utterances of leading intellectuals among us the fine fighting speech of Professor Ridgeway from the chair of the Classical Association is specially worth noting. A vigorous denunciation of mere subservience to German theorizing leads up to a frank acceptance of the most decadent of all Treitschke's dogmas.¹ A condition of unbroken peace would, it seems, 'be the greatest calamity that ever befell the human race. Such a condition means the death of all that is noblest

¹ 'Unconscious acceptance', one should rather say: Professor Ridgeway nowhere suggests that he fathers this dogma on its most conspicuous advocate. He would be the first to shrink from the logical consequences of the doctrine.

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and the growth and prosperity of all that is vilest. . . . In a world of perfect peace humanity would perish from its own physical and moral corruption.' That the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount involve such disasters had not occurred to most of us ; and the present is not the happiest time to preach Treitschke and Bernhardi as nobler and more robust evangelists than the original four. If Britain is going to win in this appalling war, it will be through being herself, and not a debased copy of Germany. The drill sergeant as we know him has done his own appointed work to admiration ; and he has no ambition to take charge of departments of our national life in which he has no place. The invasion of the voluntary principle by the Prussian ideal would infallibly ruin our most characteristic virtues, without importing the Prussian efficiency.

In other directions, however, we shall certainly do well *et ab hoste doceri*. There is no reason why our scholarship as well as our business life should not go much further than ever before on the road of German industry, thoroughness, and tireless attention to detail. A large meeting of manufacturers was recently told by a legal and scientific expert that ' the English dislike study. The Englishman is excellent in making the best of the means at his disposal, but he is almost hopeless in one thing. He will not prepare himself by intellectual work for the task that he has to do.' ¹ The indictment is not without force even among professed scholars in our country. To be lavish of pains in order to attain perfect familiarity with that corner of

¹ Speech by Lord Moulton, F.R.S., at Manchester Town Hall December 8, 1914.

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a big subject in which one hopes to advance knowledge, is a condition of success which the Germans have learnt better than we. The learning of this lesson will not impair but only enhance that gift of divination in which the British scholar at his best excels the German. It will certainly do a great deal to make the ignoring of British work absolutely impossible in future generations.

There is no reason to fear that the collapse of the German military conspiracy will interpose more than a temporary check to the fellowship of research. For a time, of course, feeling is certain to be bitter. The study of the 'North American and West Swiss' languages in Germany will be impeded by the sheer difficulty of getting natives of Britain and France to go and live among a deeply resentful people. But here scholars of the Allied nations, if true to their own ideals, can pursue quietly and tactfully the work of reconciliation. The *ultima ratio* of all research is international co-operation. Never has this been more finely shown than by the famous Berlin theologian, Professor Adolf Deissmann, in his paper on 'International and Interdenominational Research of the New Testament'.¹ And at the head of this most catholic exposition, written in the spring of 1914, there stands the significant comment: 'Upon the Editor's request and after consultation with Dr. Harnack, Dr. Deissmann has agreed that the article shall be published in spite of the present situation.' A great pioneer scholar thus leaves on record his estimate of the indispensable service that British and German scholarship can render to one another

¹ *Constructive Quarterly*, December 1914, pp. 786-804.

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and to the cause of knowledge. There must inevitably be severe provocation for some time to come in the writings of many German scholars, who are sure to ignore when they can, and scold when they cannot ignore. But the true princes of learning will most successfully resist temptation, and on our side there should be a minimum of reprisals. We in Britain shall necessarily be much less isolated than in the past. National sympathies will draw together the scholars of France, Russia, Belgium, Italy, Holland, Sweden, America, and our own country, to the great advantage of all ; and a country where knowledge is so prized as it is in Germany will not long be content with aloofness. Our own aim should be to welcome imports from German workshops and appraise them with unfailing impartiality, biding our time till the exports of British learning are equally free in passage. When we have repelled the grisly horror that threatens the world, we can afford to be generous and tactful towards the wounded patriotism of men by whose side we want to work once again, as in the happier days before the evil spirit rose from the abyss to trouble the peace of mankind.

All this our scholars will do by instinct, by the virtue of a tradition of chivalry which our great nation has not to learn now for the first time. But the thinkers of the world will have a higher function yet. This war has been influenced by ideas beyond all wars in history. A titanic struggle, which posterity could hardly match in mere bigness if the loathing bred by it proved insufficient to teach the lesson of peace, has brought out with unimagined vividness what is the meaning of the Will to Power. It

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has been ' war in heaven '—Michael and his angels arrayed against the Devil of Nietzsche. Before the war on earth began, we could see the strife in the heavenly places, where thoughts meet in the clash of warfare before they materialize down below. In Britain no less than in Germany the doctrine of force was being proclaimed ; and the right of the strong to do as he willed with his own was set forth in our reviews with barefaced effrontery that made old-fashioned people blush and gasp. Now the consequences of the new morality are before the eyes of all mankind, and men who have suffered from it will be less inclined to regard it as an improvement on the old. It is often said that force cannot destroy the cult of force. But force can only reign while successful, and when defeated on its own field no longer commands the adoration of its blind votaries. The world waits eagerly for the discrediting of the grim idol before which ghastly hecatombs have been offered with blood and tears beyond all thought. Soon, we believe, Moloch will be dragged from his pedestal, and some other object of worship will be set in the empty shrine. Can we doubt what this will be ? The Tempter offered universal sovereignty to the Son of Man, were He only ready to bow before him and hold the throne in fief from the first creator of the Will to Power. He has tempted the nations all too successfully in every age, and in this colossal strife we see the effects of yielding. Surely now the weary nations will turn to the only rival claimant for that throne. Philosophers will preach a new idealism, historians will bring new morals from the accumulated experience of the past, biologists will show

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that men do not live by bread alone, or survive in the struggle for existence by the use of the mailed fist. And so, illuminated in heart and mind by salutary pain, the intellectual leaders of the nations will enthrone at last the one true Superman, and He shall reign in His own right to the ends of the earth.

POSTSCRIPT.—*The above pages were passed for press before the publication of Sir John French's report on the effects of the German poison-gases, and, of course, before the sinking of the Lusitania. By these crimes, and by the poisoning of wells in South Africa, official Germany has shown that there is no longer a conscience to appeal to ; and if it proves that German civilians, including the professors, applaud these deeds, or even abstain from denouncing them, we must feel that the gulf between Germany and the civilized world, first opened at Louvain and Rheims, has become too wide for us to bridge till time and God's Spirit have brought contrition. The writer of this paper would only urge that the Christian attitude remains unchanged, although indefinitely harder for flesh and blood to attain. Our supreme fear must be that uncontrollable indignation may sweep our own people into acts which would be unworthy of ourselves. May God preserve us from even the most attenuated contagion of such foulness !*

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